

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 (ISO) W
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O 101503Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5960
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN FRG IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 14406

EXDIS

MIL ADDEES TREAT AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, IS, LE, US

SUBJECT: ISRAELI CONCERNS ON THE EVE OF YOM KIPPUR

1. THIS AFTERNOON, SOME THREE HOURS BEFORE THE BEGINNING
OF YOM KIPPUR, DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE GAZIT
ASKED URGENTLY TO SEE POL COUNSELOR BLACKWILL AND ARMA
WILLIAMS. GAZIT WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF
THE FOREIGN MINISTRY CIECHANOVER AND A SENIOR IDF INTELLI-
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GENCE ANALYST. DURING MEETING IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT THE
PRIME MINISTER HAD DIRECTED GAZIT TO BRIEF THE EMBASSY ON
THE CURRENT SITUATION IN LEBANON AND IRAQ IN ORDER TO HIGH-
LIGHT GOI CONCERNS.

2. GAZIT COMMENCED BY ADMITTING THAT THE GOI MAY BE OVERLY
SENSITIVE TO THE SITUATION IN LEBANON BECAUSE OF THE

DATE -- YOM KIPPUR. HOWEVER, HE STATED THAT THE GOI IS WORRIED OVER A SET OF EVENTS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED SINCE THE CEASEFIRE.

3. THE ISRAELIS DO NOT EXPECT ANY ARAB ATTACK ON ISRAEL ON YOM KIPPUR. HOWEVER, THEY DO HAVE "BAD FEELINGS" ABOUT POSSIBLE SYRIAN INTENTION TO VIOLATE THE CEASEFIRE AND "GRAB SOMETHING CRUCIAL TO THE CHRISTIANS IN BEIRUT." AGAIN ADMITTING THAT THERE WAS NO HARD EVIDENCE TO BACKUP THESE WORRIES, GAZIT PRESENTED THE FOLLOWING INDICATORS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO ISRAELI CONCERN.

-- (A) AFTER THE CEASEFIRE THE ISRAELIS NOTED REINFORCEMENTS OF SYRIAN ARTILLERY IN FIRING POSITIONS CAPABLE OF REACHING EAST BEIRUT. CURRENT ESTIMATE IS THAT 12-18 NEW ARTILLERY PIECES, DRAWN FROM THE GOLAN FRONT, HAVE REINFORCED OTHER ARTILLERY IN BEIRUT AREA.

-- (B) THE SYRIAN FORCE SEPARATING MUSLIM BEIRUT FROM CHRISTIAN BEIRUT HAS BEEN THE 33RD SYRIAN BRIGADE. THE SYRIANS HAVE NOW PULLED THE 33RD BRIGADE OFF THE LINE AND HAVE CONCENTRATED IT ALONG WITH TWO COMMANDO COMPANIES IN THE TEL ZATAR AREA. GAZIT REFERRED TO THIS AS SOMETHING NEW, A "FIST OF INFANTRY" WHICH COULD BE USED BY THE SYRIANS VERY QUICKLY AGAINST CHRISTIANS.

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-- (C) THE THIRD INDICATOR, AND THAT WHICH CONCERNS THE ISRAELIS THE GREATEST, IS THAT THE REPLACEMENT FORCES IN THE BUFFER AREA BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT ARE TWO PLA BRIGADES NEWLY INTRODUCED INTO THE AREA FROM SYRIA. "IT IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE WHY THE SYRIANS HAVE PUT PALESTINIANS OF ALL PEOPLE IN THE BUFFER." IN ANSWER TO BLACKWILL'S QUESTION, GAZIT CLAIMED THAT THE IDF HAS HARD INTELLIGENCE THAT FIVE BATTALIONS OF THE PLA, TOTALLING ABOUT 1500 MEN, ARRIVED IN BEIRUT ON 7 OCTOBER, AND TOOK UP POSITIONS IN THE BUFFER ZONE.

4. GAZIT STATED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD DIRECTED HIM TO MAKE IT VERY CLEAR TO US THAT THE GOI IS DOING ITS VERY BEST TO CONVINCE THE CHRISTIANS TO OBSERVE THE CEASEFIRE AND NOT PROVOKE THE SYRIANS. GAZIT SAID "I HOPE THEY WILL BEHAVE BUT I CAN'T GUARANTEE IT." BLACKWILL THEN ASKED WHAT PRECISELY THE ISRAELIS WERE HEARING FROM THE CHRISTIANS IN BEIRUT. GAZIT RESPONDED THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH EXACTLY WHAT THE CHRISTIANS INTENTIONS ARE BECAUSE "THEY ARE NOT UNITED OR COHERENT." MOST RECENT MESSAGES FROM CHRISTIANS INDICATE : 1) THEY INTEND TO OBSERVE THE CEASEFIRE; AND 2) THEY DO NOT BELIEVE IT WILL

LAST FOR LONG.

5. DURING THIS PART OF CONVERSATION POL COUNSELOR TWICE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER SPECULATION THAT IF THE CEASEFIRE IS BROKEN IT MAY VERY WELL BE THE CHRISTIANS WHO BREAK IT BECAUSE THEY SEE THIS AS MEANS TO FURTHER INTERNATIONALIZE PROBLEM AND TO TRIGGER ISRAELI MILITARY INTERVENTION. THUS, IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR ISRAELIS TO CONTINUE TO KEEP PRESSURE ON MILITIAS TO OBSERVE CEASEFIRE. GAZIT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE CHRISTIANS NOT BE BLAMED IF INDEED THE CEASEFIRE IS BROKEN AND RESTATED THAT

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EXDIS

MIL ADDEES TREAT AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

THE GOI IS DOING EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO "IMPLORE" THE CHRISTIANS TO HOLD THEIR FIRE.

6. GAZIT NEXT BROUGHT UP MEETING BETWEEN SARKIS AND ASSAD. HE SAID THE GOI KNEW THE PLAN WHICH SARKIS HAD PRESENTED INCLUDED THE SEPARATION OF FORCES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF LEBANESE FORCES AS A BUFFER BUT ASSAD HAD REJECTED THIS. GAZIT THOUGHT THAT THE STRIKE AND DEMONSTRATIONS

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IN WEST BEIRUT AGAINST SARKIS YESTERDAY WERE ENCOURAGED BY THE SYRIANS. GAZIT CONTINUED THAT HE COULDN'T REALLY SEE "THE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS LEBANESE ARMY" IN THE SEPARATION ROLE. WHEN PRESSED GAZIT GAVE HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT THE ALTERNATIVES TO THE INTRODUCTION OF A LEBANESE ARMY BUFFER WERE THREE, IN ORDER OF PRIORITY. THE FIRST WOULD BE SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM BEIRUT AREA AND THE INTRODUCTION OF AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS - BOTH OF WHOM WANT A CEASEFIRE. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL TROOPS WOULD BE REQUIRED.

7. IF THIS NOT POSSIBLE, THE SECOND PRIORITY WOULD BE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE CURRENT ARAB FORCE IN THE BEIRUT AREA BY APPOINTMENT OF A FOREIGN COMMANDER, SUCH AS SIILASVUO OR ERSKINE, OR SDMEONE ELSE - "NOT A SYRIAN STOOGE" - OVER THE ARABS. THIRD PRIORITY, IF THE FIRST AND SECOND WERE TOO MUCH OF A FACE-SAVING PROBLEM FOR SYRIA, WOULD BE THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SYRIAN FORCE AND THE CREATION OF AN ADF WITHOUT SYRIANS. GAZIT RESTATED THAT ALTHOUGH HE CONCURS WITH THE REQUIREMENT FOR A BUFFER AND HAS NOTHING AGAINST THE LEBANESE ARMY, HE IS CONVINCED LAF COULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE.

CONCERNED IRAQ. HE SAID THE IDF NOW HAS "HARD EVIDENCE" THAT FIVE OR SIX SAM-6 BATTERIES HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED AT THE FORWARD LOGISTICAL STAGING BASE AT H-3. IT IS NORMAL IRAQI PROCEDURE TO MOVE A SAM REGIMENT OF ABOUT FIVE BATTERIES IN ADVANCE OF A MOVEMENT OF GROUND FORCES. TO DATE THE IDF DOES NOT REPEAT NOT HAVE ANY EVIDENCE THAT IRAQI GROUND FORCES ARE DEPLOYING WESTWARD. HOWEVER, THE MOVEMENT OF THE SAME BATTERIES HAS ALERTED THEM TO THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH MOVES. GAZIT COMBINED HIS CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBLE MOVEMENT OF IRAQI FORCES WITH

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WHAT HE CALLED THE "RAPPROCHEMENT" BETWEEN SYRIA AND IRAQ.

9. COMMENT: GAZIT BEGAN THE MEETING BY ADMITTING

GOI MAY BE OVERLY SENSITIVE BECAUSE OF THE FIVE YEAR
ANNIVERSARY BEING MARKED TODAY. HOWEVER, ISRAELI CONCERN
IS REAL, ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO PLA DEPLOYMENT IN
BEIRUT. IF TRUE, THIS OBVIOUSLY WILL RAISE THE
SUSPICIONS OF BOTH THE GOI AND THE CHRISTIANS AND
WILL MAKE THE CEASEFIRE HARDER TO MAINTAIN. LEWIS

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